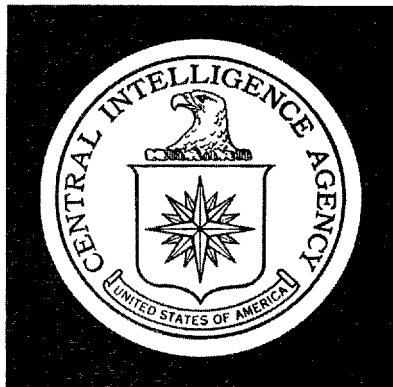


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12

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

113

9 June 1967

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Information as of 1600
9 June 1967

25X1

HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
The first phase of Operation MALHEUR has ended in the Duc Pho area of southern Quang Ngai Province (Paras. 1-2). The Communists are stepping up their efforts to win the support of montagnard villagers in the central highlands (Paras. 3-6).

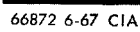
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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Ho Chi Minh is reported to have made only one public appearance in the last three months (Paras. 1-4).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The Viet Cong have written a letter to Sihanouk agreeing to "recognize formally" the territorial integrity of Cambodia within its present borders (Paras. 1-3).



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Three battalions of the US 101st Airborne Division have concluded the opening phase of Operation MALHEUR, conducted from 10 May to 7 June in the Duc Pho area of southern coastal Quang Ngai Province. Communist losses were 392 killed; American casualties were 51 killed and 285 wounded.

2. The allied campaign thus far appears to have achieved its objective--to delay or disrupt an anticipated summer offensive by elements of the 3rd North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Division against a network of allied special forces camps and South Vietnamese district headquarters in southern Quang Ngai. Phase II of Operation MALHEUR, with three US Army battalions participating, is currently under way in generally the same tactical area. However, no significant enemy contact has thus far been reported.

Viet Cong Step up Activity in the Central Highlands

3. In addition to continuing indications of North Vietnamese Army infiltration through the Laotian corridor into South Vietnam's central highlands, there have been reports recently that the Communists are stepping up their efforts in the highlands to win the support of local montagnard villagers.

4. [redacted]
Viet Cong district committees in the central highlands are organizing local montagnard villagers into work teams in order to finish the construction of infiltration routes and to carry supplies to secret base areas. Also, [redacted] the Viet Cong Gia Lai Province Committee (which is responsible for portions of the GVN's Kontum and Pleiku provinces) has received funds from the Viet Cong Military Region (MR) 5 headquarters to buy "large amounts of livestock, rice, and warm clothing" from the local people for the use of Communist forces.

25X1

9 June 1967

I-1

5. In a related development, the montagnards in Kontum and Pleiku provinces reportedly have been warned by Viet Cong cadre to stay away from GVN-controlled areas and allied installations because these will be attacked during this summer's rainy season. In particular, the Viet Cong reportedly intend to prohibit all access to Kontum city by the end of June.

6. These reports are consistent with numerous other indications that Communist forces intend to launch an offensive in the strategic highlands area this summer, in an effort to spread thin and tie down US troops and prevent them from reinforcing the heavily populated coastal delta provinces of MR 5.

9 June 1967

I-2

25X1

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Approved For Release 2005/12/24 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002100010012-9

III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

9 June 1967

III-IV - 1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh, who was 77 years old on 19 May, has made only one reported public appearance in the past three months, his longest period of inactivity in the past seven years. Ho made appearances in the second week of March and reportedly cast a ballot in the Hanoi election on 24 April. All other references to him in Hanoi propaganda have been related to letters and official documents in his party and government roles.

2.

There is no other evidence to indicate that Ho was sick although his age alone would make him subject to occasional illnesses.

3. In past years, Ho has periodically disappeared from public view for as long as seven weeks but these absences have usually been periods of vacation. Ho maintained his usual pattern of appearances up through mid-March of this year, and it is possible that he is now enjoying an extended vacation.

4. Ho's incapacity at this time would remove the central unifying figure in the Vietnamese revolution and probably usher in a period of collective leadership. This theme of collective leadership was prominent in a recent article celebrating Ho's birthday in the May issue of the party theoretical journal Hoc Tap. The article pointed out that in Vietnam the politburo constitutes the leadership and that decisions flow from that body rather than from Ho alone.

9 June 1967

V-1

VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Viet Cong have apparently taken a new step to improve relations with Cambodia. Chief of State Sihanouk claimed in an 8 June press conference that he had received a letter from the Liberation Front stating that it agrees to "recognize formally" the territorial integrity of Cambodia "within its present borders."

2. If Sihanouk's statement is accurate, the Front's letter marks the first time that the Vietnamese Communists have publicly pledged recognition for Cambodia's "present boundaries." The Front told Phnom Penh, during abortive border negotiations last fall, that it would be willing to issue such a broad public statement. At that time, however, it refused to meet Cambodian demands that it sign an agreement which defined the border. There is no indication that the Communists have changed their position that such a border delimitation must be held in abeyance until the end of the Vietnam war.

3. The Front's letter comes at a time when Sihanouk is renewing his long-standing effort to get international recognition of Cambodia's borders. It is probably designed to offset the effects of Sihanouk's current campaign against the Cambodian left, which has been accompanied by frequent allusions to the malevolent influence of the "Viet Minh." The wording of the letter--as described by Sihanouk--is similar to that of a statement recently made by the Soviet Union. Sihanouk had contrasted the Soviet position to that of some "great nations who claim they are friends of Cambodia"--probably a reference to Communist China and North Vietnam, neither of which has yet recognized Cambodia's present borders.

9 June 1967

VI-1

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